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AUTHOR Caliste, Edward R.
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ABSTRACT

The Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale was found to be helpful in assisting both teachers and counselors in classifying nonproductive classroom behaviors. Peer modeling and role-playing significantly reduced classroom disturbances and resulted in improved attendance (though increased attendance did not result in increased learning). The data support the need for hiring counselors at the elementary-school level to help students better understand themselves and the school environment. There is also a need to more accurately identify and categorize behavior that is not conducive to successful academic functioning, particularly such "inconspicuous" behavior as inattentiveness, inability to comprehend material, and reliance on external supports. Students who exhibit such behavior may have a more significant impact on the classroom learning process than more openly disruptive students. (Author/CS)

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THE EFFECT OF COUNSELING ON THE BEHAVIOR OF SIXTH GRADE UNDERACHIEVERS

Edward R. Caliste

University of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

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THE EFFECT OF COUNSELING ON

THE BEHAVIOR OF SIXTH GRADE UNDERACHIEVERS

It is common knowledge to educators that disruptive classroom behavior impedes the learning process both for the disruptive student and the rest of the class. There is also evidence to indicate the need for established control in the classroom early in the school year if there is going to be effective instruction throughout the year (Moskowitz and Hayman, 1976). The desirable amount of control may well be established by reactions to overt classroom disruptions. However, Spivack and Swift (1966) found that the less conspicuous classroom behavior such as poor comprehension, inattentive-withdrawn, and reliance on external supports has a more significant impact on the learning process than "acting out" types of disruptive behavior. The child who makes himself inconspicuous in class, while not disturbing others, may be missing as much as the child who annoys peers or who requires the use of external control.

While common agreement prevails on the inverse relationship between disruptive classroom behavior and learning, the evaluation and classification of these behavior patterns are often left to the subjectivity of teacher attitude and teacher perception. Beckman (1970) showed that the child's classroom

performance affects both the teacher's beliefs concerning the child's competency and the teacher's beliefs concerning the causal source of the performance and thus, influences her sentiments toward the student.

Various studies (Meichenbaum, Bowers, & Ross, 1969; Rosenthal, & Jacobson, 1966; Seavers, 1973) found that the teacher's attitude and perception of the intellectual capability of the students may have a lasting negative impact on their learning and achievement. Because of the importance of teacher attitude, perception and thus, teacher expectancy (Meichenbaum, Bowers, & Ross, 1969), seems plausible to establish a more coherent and less subjective measure of nonproductive classroom behavior, in order to use a type of intervention that will change these behavior patterns, and when possible, identify the causes. If educators can more accurately identify disruptive classroom behavior and methods by which they may be extinguished or their sources removed, faculty and staff members may more effectively interact with the child and enhance the students' level of performance (Swift, & Spivack, 1969).

An appropriate instrument for assessing negative classroom behavior is the DEBS (Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale). According to Buros (1972), it is intended to be used by elementary school teachers who wish to "better understand, describe, and communicate the behavior problems of children in their classes"; the Devereux Scales are oriented toward these

behavior patterns which interfere with successful academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of counseling on the behavior of underachievers in three urban public schools. More specifically, the purpose of the study is to:

(1) Identify and classify three types of nonproductive classroom behavior of underachievers defined by the Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale.

(2) Use video modeling as a counseling technique to modify or eliminate certain negative classroom behavior.

(3) Use role-playing as a specific counseling technique in cases where modeling is not effective.

The hypotheses tested are as follows:

H_1: There is no significant difference between the mean for Classroom Disturbance of students who receive counseling compared to that of students who do not receive counseling.

H_2: There is no significant difference between the mean for Disrespect-Defiance of students who receive counseling and those students who do not receive counseling.

H_3: There is no significant difference between the mean for Inattentive-Withdrawn students who receive counseling and those students who do not receive counseling.

H_4: There is no significant difference between the mean for the GPA in promotional subjects of students who receive counseling and those students who do not receive counseling.

H_5: There is no significant difference between the mean for Attendance of students who receive counseling and those students who do not receive counseling.

Method of Procedure

Because peer group is a powerful force in molding the behavior of individuals (Havighurst, & Neurgarten, 1962), the major counseling techniques were social modeling and role-playing using selected students in the school population. Video tapes were made of the peer models who were selected in the following manner:

(1) The sixth grade student population was asked to identify (write the name) the student whom they admire and would like to emulate.

(2) Each student was asked to use a checklist (see Appendix A) consisting of student characteristics that are related to peer prestige, i.e., athletic prowess, dancing, academic ability, etc. (Krech, Crutchfield, & Ballachey, 1962). This procedure was intended to minimize surface judgments often made by young children.

The counselors (3) and teachers (11) of these students met with selected student representatives to evaluate the results and make a final selection of peer models. Two (2) males and three (3) females were selected in two of the schools. Two (2) males and two (2) females were selected

in the third school, thus providing peer models for both sexes. These models were video taped (1) in class during the regular classroom period, and (2) out of class in specific appropriate and inappropriate behaviors (dropped books while teacher was talking, borrowed pencils, played-with classmates, and then asked teacher to repeat the instructions given, etc.). The most distracting inappropriate behaviors video taped for this purpose were those submitted by the teachers participating in the study. Both sets of video tapes were used in group counseling sessions. The number and kinds of behaviors taped enabled the counselor to make the appropriate selection for the group session. Role-playing was also used. Counseling sessions were held once a week for three quarters, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

Population and Sample

Academic underachievers in this study were those sixth grade inner city pupils with a "D" average or lower at the end of the first quarter. The total sixth grade student population consisted of 369 pupils. The total school population for the entire system was approximately 85,000 students. Forty (40) underachievers were randomly selected. Twenty (20) were placed in the control group and twenty (20) in the experimental group. Teachers of these students were identified and asked to participate in the study.

Design of the Study

The research design for the study was the post-test - only group design (Campbell, & Stanley design number 6). The instrument used was the DEBS. While the pre-test is a concept deeply embedded in the thinking of research workers in education and psychology, it is not actually essential to true experimental designs. The most adequate all-purpose assurance of lack of initial biases between groups is randomization (Campbell, & Stanley, 1973).

Results of the Study

A one-way Anova (analysis of variance) at the .05 level was applied to the data representing the dependent variables which are Classroom Disturbances, Disrespect-Defiance, Inattentive-Withdrawn Behavior, Attendance, and GPA. Chi-square was also used on the first three (3) dependent variables to determine the number and percent of students in mean deviation categories which are identified as range (1), (2), and (3) - (see page 10).

The first hypothesis was rejected. The data show a considerable difference between the mean score on the dependent variable, Classroom Disturbance, for the experimental group and the control group.

	Mean	S.D.	Variance
Experimental Group	13.050	4.946	24.4711
Control Group	16.400	3.965	15.7763

Thus, the mean for the experimental group in Classroom Disturbance was substantially lower than the mean for the control group. The analysis of variance yielded the following specific data relative to the significance in the F-Ratio and the statistically computed F-Probability for this sample (see Table I).

Table I

Variable - Classroom Disturbance Score
Analysis of Variance

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
Between Groups	1	112.2250	112.2250	5.584	0.0233*
Within Groups	38	763.7500	20.0987		
Total	39	875.9750			

*P = <.05

Because the F-Probability was .0233 which was significantly lower than the alpha level of .05, apparently video tape models and role-playing were successful counseling techniques in reducing classroom disturbance for this sample.

The second hypothesis was accepted. The means for the dependent variable, Disrespect-Defiance, for the experimental and control group were 9.00 and 9.700, respectively, indicating only marginal differences. The analysis of variance showed the following specific data for F-Ratio and F-Probability comparison (see Table II).

Table II

Variable - Disrespect-Defiance Score
Analysis of Variance

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
Between Groups	1	4.9000	4.9000	0.232	0.6327
Within Groups	38	802.2000	21.1105		
Total	39	807.1000			

Because the F-Probability was 0.6327 which was higher than the alpha level (.05), the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean score on this variable for students who received counseling and those who did not. Apparently, video tape modeling and role-playing were not successful counseling techniques for this sample.

The third hypothesis was also accepted. The mean for the dependent variable, Inattentive-Withdrawn, for the experimental and control group yielded borderline differences (12.2000 and

13.8500), respectively. The analysis of variance revealed the following specific data for F-Ratio and F-Probability comparison (see Table III).

Table III

Variable - Inattentive-Withdrawn Score
Analysis of Variance

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
Between Groups	1	27.2250	27.2250	1.835	0.1835
Within Groups	38	563.7500	14.8355		
Total	39	590.9750			

Because the F-Probability of 0.1835 was significantly higher than the alpha level (.05), the conclusion was that there was no significance between the mean on this variable for students who received counseling and those who did not. The counseling techniques used in the study had no significant effect for this sample.

The fourth hypothesis was also accepted. The mean scores for GPA for the experimental and control group were 70.8500 and 70.55, respectively. Table IV gives the analysis of variance with the specific F-Ratio and statistically computed F-Probability for this sample.

Table IV

Variable - GPA
Analysis of Variance

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
Between Groups	1	0.9013	0.9013	0.106	0.7467
Within Groups	38	323.5000	8.5132		
Total	39	324.4013			

Because the F-Probability of 0.7467 was significantly higher than the alpha level (.05), the conclusion was that there was no significance between the mean for the GPA in promotional subjects of students who received counseling and those who did not. The assumption of counselor techniques being used to reduce disruptive classroom behavior and thus, provide teachers with a more receptive student population did not result in significant academic gains, as measured by GPA for this sample.

The fifty hypothesis was rejected. The mean for the dependent variable attendance as measured by the number of days absent in the experimental and control group is shown below:

	Mean	S.D.	Variance
Experimental Group	13.7500	9.8829	97.6711
Control Group	32.2500	15.7710	248.7237

The analysis of variance provided the specific data for F-Ratio and F-Probability comparison for significance in this sample (see Table V).

Table V

Variable - Attendance
Analysis of Variance

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F-Ratio	F-Prob.
Between Groups	1	3422.5000	3422.5000	19.761	0.0001
Within Groups	38	6581.5000	173.1974		
Total	39	10004.			

*P = <.05

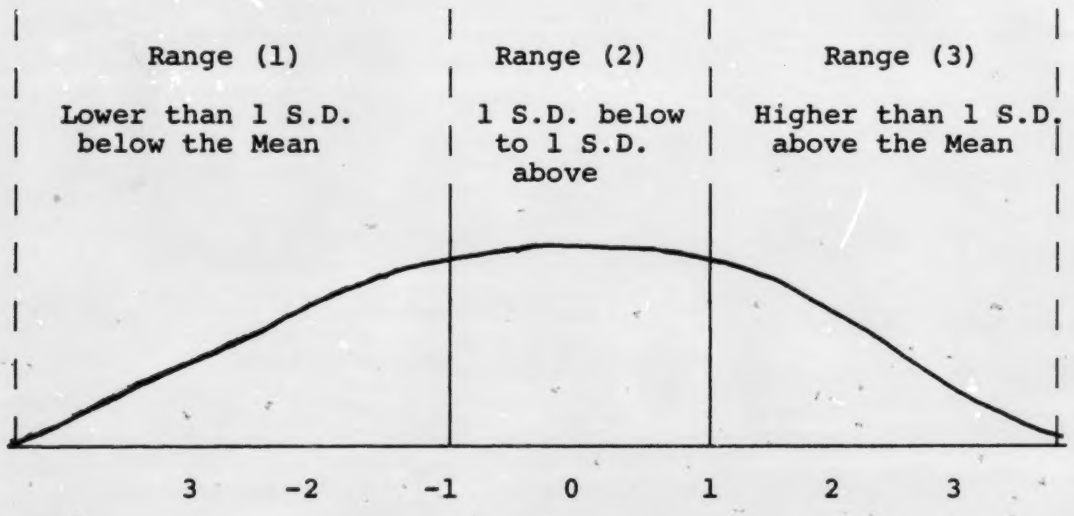
Because the F-Probability of 0.0001 was significantly lower than the alpha level (.05), the conclusion was that the mean attendance for students who received counseling as measured by the number of days absent from school was significantly lower than those who did not. Apparently, video tape modeling and role-playing were successful counseling techniques in facilitating school adjustment and thus, lowered the absentee rate for this sample.

As previously stated, a chi-square (2x3 design) was used to determine the number and percent of students in mean deviation categories which are identified as follows:

Range (1) Lower than 1 S.D. below the mean.

Range (2) 1 S.D. below to 1 S.D. above the mean.

Range (3) Higher than 1 S.D. above the mean - (see diagram).



The chi-square analysis of the data appears below (see Table VI). Because there were no students in range (1), the computer printout eliminated that column (SP 55 Manual-Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Brent, 1975). This statistical procedure is also supported by Siegel (1956).

Table VI

Chi-Square for Mean Deviation in Ranges 1, 2, and 3

Groups		Range 2	Range 3	Raw Total
Experimental	No. of SS	15	5	20
	% by Range	75	25	50
	% of Total Population	37.5	12.5	
Control	No. of SS	7	13	20
	% by Range	35	65	50
	% of Total Population	17.5	32.5	
Column Total	SS	22	18	40
	% of Total Population	55.0	45.0	100

The results of the chi-square analysis was significant at the .05 level for the dependent variable, Classroom Disturbance. The computed significance was 0.0261 which was considerably less than the tested alpha level (.05). Fifteen (15) students (75%) in the experimental group were in range 2 and only five (25%) in range 3, while 7 students (35%) in the control group were in range 2 and a high 13 (65%) of them in range 3. A score above +1 S.D. for this variable suggests an area of behavioral difficulty which is not conducive to successful

academic functioning. Thus, the statistical significance of the chi-square findings in student mean deviation scores concur with the statistical findings of the analysis of variance for this variable. There was no significance in the chi-square results on the dependent variables, Disrespect-Defiance and Inattentive-Withdrawn. This also concurs with the analysis of variance for these variables.

Implication for Education

The findings of the study seem to have some implications for education that will help us to better understand our students. They are as follows:

(1) The DEBS appears to be helpful in assisting both teachers and counselors in classifying specific nonproductive classroom behaviors.

(2) Video tape peer models and role-playing were successful counselor techniques in significantly reducing classroom disturbances and in improving attendance.

(3) The data support the need for hiring counselors at the elementary school level to assist students in better understanding themselves and the school environment.

(4) School personnel should explore other factors, i.e., curriculum, teaching methods, management, etc., to determine why a statistically significant difference in attendance does not result in a significant increase in learning as measured by GPA.

(5) There is a need for a scale with background research and an acceptable validity to identify and categorize behavior that is not conducive to successful academic functioning at an earlier age.

APPENDIX A

Student checklist of person whom they admire and would like to emulate.

_____ _____
LAST NAME FIRST NAME

What student in the school do you associate with most of the time?

_____ _____
LAST NAME FIRST NAME

Which of the following characteristics do you admire most in your friend [respond by using a check (✓)]:

The person is a good dancer.

The person wears good clothes.

The person has a good reputation.

The person has money.

The person stirs up a little excitement.

The person is very knowledgeable about popular music and popular singers.

The person is a good athlete (volleyball, basketball, softball, etc.).

The person is a good student.

The person has many friends.

The person is good looking.

The person is respected.

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